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QUESTION OF CYPRUS

Letter dated 19 September 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

My Government's views on the purchase of the sophisticated S-300 missile system by the Greek Cypriot administration have already been expressed through statements issued by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 6 and 10 January 1997.

Official declarations from the Greek Cypriot administration and the Russian Federation indicate that the preparations for the installation of the S-300 missile system in south Cyprus are continuing.

Technical specifications of this missile system are such that it constitutes a direct threat not only to the security of the Turkish Cypriots but also to the security of Turkey itself. With a range of 150 kilometres, the missiles have the capacity to penetrate the airspace of neighbouring countries. Accordingly, the Greek Cypriot side will acquire the capability of hitting targets in Turkey, which is only 64 kilometres away. It is obvious that the developments pertaining to the acquisition of these missiles will exacerbate the existing tension in the island, and also create instability in the region, thus further complicating the efforts aimed at finding a solution to the Cyprus question. Many countries have already voiced similar views and expressed their concern over the repercussions of the deployment of the missiles. The Security Council, in its resolution 1092 (1996) of 23 December 1996 and resolution 1117 (1997) of 27 June 1997, also reiterated its grave concern about the excessive levels of military forces and armaments in south Cyprus and the rate at which they are being expanded, upgraded and modernized, including by the introduction of sophisticated weaponry.

There have been attempts to portray the sale of armaments and missiles to south Cyprus as the mere fulfilment of a trade contract. It is obvious that this is not as simple as it is presented. The Cyprus issue has been on the agenda of the Security Council since early 1964. It is assumed that, in particular, the members of the Security Council have, above all, political and moral responsibilities for the preservation of international peace and security and thus should refrain from any action that might further complicate the search for a peaceful solution to conflicts. Furthermore, arms sales to south Cyprus also constitute a violation of the 1993 Principles Governing Conventional Arms Transfers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), where it is categorically stated that each participating State has to consider "the internal and regional situation in and around the recipient country, in the light of existing tensions or armed conflicts" and are obliged to "avoid transfers which would be likely to endanger peace, introduce destabilizing military capabilities into a region, or otherwise contribute to regional instability".

By the same token, it has to be noted that by supporting the purchase of the aforementioned missile system by the Greek Cypriot administration and taking concrete steps for furthering the so-called "joint defence doctrine" with the administration in the south of the island, Greece is engendering instability in Cyprus. At the same time it has been reported in the Greek press that the newly constructed Paphos airbase in south Cyprus will become operational during the large-scale joint Greek-Greek Cypriot military exercises, code-named "Nikiforos", which are to be carried out in October 1997. Such initiatives will only deepen the distrust among the parties and further increase the tension in the island.

There should be no doubt that Turkey cannot remain indifferent to developments that will endanger the security of the Turkish Cypriot community and its own, and will take corresponding measures. Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot side are also determined not to allow the installation of missiles in south Cyprus to be used as a bargaining element in the negotiation process.

In the light of the present tense situation in Cyprus and the gravity of the recent developments that I referred to above, my Government wishes to request that you, Mr. Secretary-General, urgently take initiatives with the parties concerned with a view to preventing the deployment of S-300 missiles on the island.

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 61, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Hüseyin E. ÇELEM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative